



# Chapter One

## A Very Bunny Birthday



Harry Gribble, also known as Super Soccer Boy, was walking home from school with his best mate Jake. Lots of people greeted him on the way – ever since the huge thunderstorm that had transformed him from ‘Harry Gribble who couldn’t even dribble’ into the super-powered,



super-football player he was today, Harry had become a bit of a celebrity.

‘Coming to the park for a kickabout?’ asked Jake.

This was another way that Harry’s life had changed. These days people were falling over themselves just for the opportunity to play football with him instead of avoiding him like the plague. Not only that, they actually *wanted* to be on his team.

‘Sorry, I can’t,’ said Harry, disappointed. ‘It’s Daisy’s birthday. I have to go straight home for her special birthday tea – her friends from



nursery are coming and they all want to meet me.’ Harry blushed. ‘Hey, why don’t you come too?’ he added enthusiastically. ‘It’ll be much less boring if you’re there.’

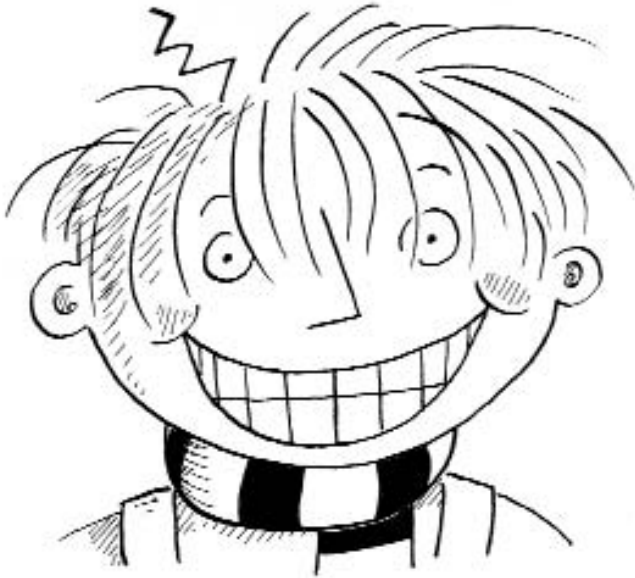
‘Er, no offence, Harry, but spending my afternoon with a bunch of two- and three-year-olds is *not* my idea of fun.’

‘Nor mine,’ groaned Harry, trudging off.





Harry turned the corner of Crumbly Drive and tried to get himself into a party mood. As much as his little sister irritated him, he didn't want to spoil her birthday by being a party pooper. So by the time he reached the front door, he'd managed to fix his best attempt at a cheesy Happy Birthday grin to his face.



'HARRY!' Daisy virtually exploded when he came through the door. She threw herself straight at him, hugged him tight and covered



him with jammy fingerprints and sticky kisses. 'Look at me, Harry, I'm a *bunny!*'

Daisy was *totally* obsessed with bunnies. She had bunny slippers, bunny wallpaper, bunny T-shirts, bunny pyjamas, bunnies on her duvet cover, several toy bunnies, a bunny-shaped night light and so on and so on. Now, she was dressed



as a bunny as well, complete with fluffy white tail and big floppy ears.

‘Doesn’t she look adorable!’ said Harry’s mum. ‘One of her friends from nursery got it for her. She’s so thrilled!’ Harry could see that his mum was going all gooey and was on the verge of mumsy tears. You know the sort.

‘Er, yes, she looks very cute,’ said Harry, trying to wipe off the jam that Daisy had deposited on his trousers. ‘I think I’d better go and change.’

‘Good idea. And while you’re up there you can write your name on the gift tag for Daisy’s present from all of us. It’s in our room on the chest of drawers.

When Dad gets home we can give it to her.’

Mum opened the door to the living room, which was full of toddlers and a



collection of mums and dads. Harry got a brief blast of deafening squeals and a glimpse of the total mayhem inside before she shut the door behind her.

‘Hi, Ron!’ said Harry to his pet rat as he went into his room. He chucked his school bag on the floor and took Ron out of his cage. ‘I’d better not take you downstairs, they’d totally freak.’ He chuckled, imagining the effect his rat would have on a room full of toddlers . . . and their mums.

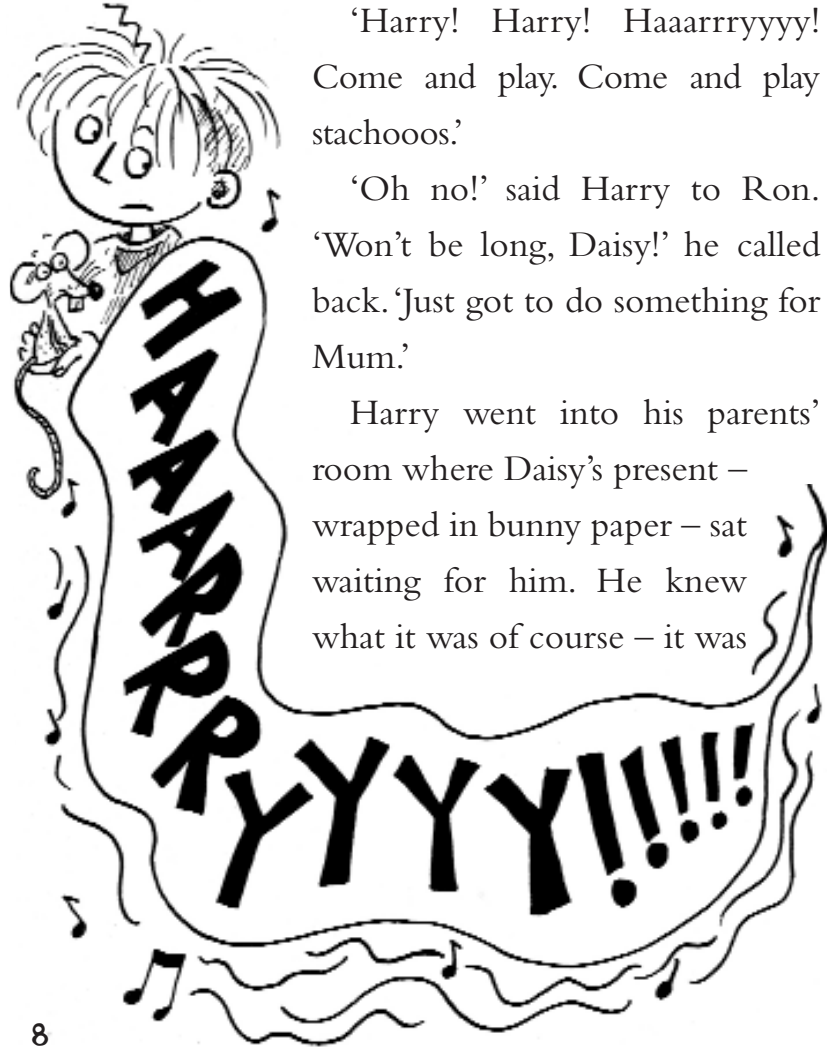


Harry changed his clothes and was just wondering how long he could hang around in his room before he was missed when he heard Daisy's sing-song voice calling upstairs.

'Harry! Harry! Haaarrryyyyy! Come and play. Come and play stachooos.'

'Oh no!' said Harry to Ron. 'Won't be long, Daisy!' he called back. 'Just got to do something for Mum.'

Harry went into his parents' room where Daisy's present – wrapped in bunny paper – sat waiting for him. He knew what it was of course – it was



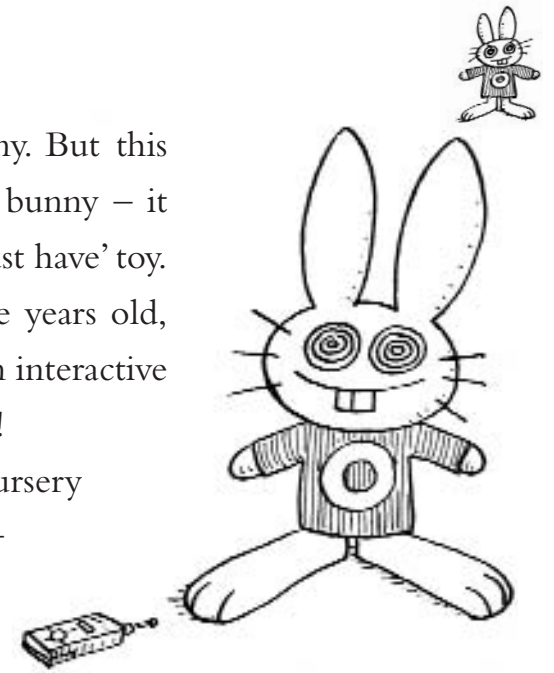
yet another bunny. But this was no ordinary bunny – it was the latest 'must have' toy. If you were three years old, that was. It was an interactive electronic bunny!

Everyone at nursery had one already – at least that was what Daisy kept saying. They were being advertised everywhere non-stop, with the most annoying jingle you have ever heard. The kind that gets into your head, gets stuck there and drives you nuts:

*You'll love your little bunny  
He makes every day feel sunny.  
He's so sweet and he's so funny.  
He's your bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny love . . .*

'Yuk!' said Harry as the tune went round and round in his brain.

Harry jumped downstairs in one super leap and cart-wheeled across the hall – not because





he was in a hurry to join the party, but just because he could. He took a deep breath and opened the door to the living room.

‘HARRY!’

Earsplitting toddler shrieks erupted as he went in and what felt like hundreds of sticky toddler fingers pulled him into the middle of the room. The mums and dads looked at him admiringly and nudged each other.

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry spotted an



electronic bunny, presumably brought along by one of Daisy’s friends. He could have sworn it was looking at him when it suddenly burst into life and started singing the bunny jingle. Harry’s little hangers-on dragged him towards it and danced around him, joining in with the song.

‘... bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny loooooove.’

A shiver went down Harry’s spine.

‘That is truly creepy,’ he said.